



NRC NEWS

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NRC ISSUES FINAL RULE ALLOWING PARTS OF REACTOR SITES TO BE RELEASED FOR UNRESTRICTED USE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is publishing amendments to its regulations to standardize the process for permitting nuclear power plant licensees to release parts of their facilities or sites for unrestricted use if they are able to demonstrate that any residual radiation on the property is within regulatory limits.

At present, NRC regulations do not directly address the release of part of a reactor facility or site before the NRC approves a license termination plan. The license termination plan describes the steps to be followed to decommission a reactor facility and to satisfy radioactive exposure criteria in NRC regulations in order to allow release of the site for other uses.

Recently, several NRC reactor licensees have expressed interest in releasing parts of their sites. The final rule is directed at operating and decommissioning reactor facilities and does not include other nuclear facilities, such as those engaged in fuel fabrication.

Under the new rule, an NRC licensee that wants to release part of a reactor site for unrestricted use must conduct radiological surveys to demonstrate that any residual radiation is within regulatory limits and document the history of all activities conducted on that property to ensure that all sources of residual radiation have been accounted for.

When it receives a licensee's proposal for a partial site release the NRC will publish a public notice seeking public comment and offer the opportunity for a public meeting in the vicinity of the power plant. It also will conduct independent reviews and inspections, if necessary, to ensure that strict radiological criteria are met before approving any request for a partial site release.

The NRC believes that the rule will help maintain safety by establishing a consistent process for considering partial site releases. The rule will add a new section to Part 50 of Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

Details about the proposed rule, inviting public comment, were published in the *Federal Register* on September 4, 2001. Minor changes were made as a result of comments received. The amendments will be published shortly in the *Federal Register*, and will become effective 30 days after publication.

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